

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

Held in Washington D. C. - October 22, 1952

The third meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts, during the fiscal year 1953, was held in its Office in the Interior Department Building on Wednesday, October 22, 1952. The following members were present:

Mr. Finley, Chairman,
Prof. Hudnut,
Prof. Belluschi,
Mr. Peets,
Mr. de Weldon,

also H. P. Caemmerer, Secretary and
Administrative Officer.

The Secretary reported the illness of Mr. Neild, and that he would be unable to attend meetings of the Commission until after January 1st. The Commission received this information with much regret, and asked Chairman Finley to write to Mr. Neild, and convey to him their sympathy.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING: The Commission approved the Minutes of the meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts, held on September 17, 1952 with the exception of Item 5, BALTIMORE AND WASHINGTON PARKWAY BRIDGE DESIGN. The subject is to receive further consideration at this meeting.

2. BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY BRIDGE: Chairman Finley reported that when Mr. Harry T. Thompson, Assistant Superintendent, Office of National Capital Parks, heard of what had taken place at the meeting of the Commission on September 17th, concerning the design, he felt very much disturbed. The letter contained a number of severe criticisms, and to carry them out in a revised design would mean several months delay, and consequently several month's delay in opening the Baltimore-Washington Parkway for traffic.

Mr. Finley said that, accordingly, he took up this matter with Mr. Peets, and a letter was drafted (Exhibit A), which stated in part, "the change recommended in the Commission's letter of September 24, would probably not increase

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Mr. Finley said that, accordingly, he took up this matter with Mr. Peete, and a letter was drafted (Exhibit A), which stated in part, "the change recommended in the Commission's letter of September 24, would probably not increase

the construction cost of the bridge but would involve a delay of several months beyond the date on which completion was proposed."

Professor Hudnut said, "I am rather sorry about that because I would like to have made a fight on it."

Professor Belluschi said: "I would not question Mr. Thompson, but it seems to me the delay of three to six months for structural changes, really a change of drawings, seems to be very exaggerated, to say the least. No basic change in the design was asked for. The caisson and the foundation certainly could begin, and the railing should be changed, certainly without too much difficulty. They probably did not like the idea of changing the drawings. It is a burdensome thing, but I don't think it would take three to six months to do it."

Mr. Peets said, "Yes, there is a great deal in that. It has been very disappointing to me that they have pressed this job as little as they have since we had our conference with Mr. Horne. But in the absence of Mr. Thompson there was no one in authority to speak for the Office of National Capital Parks. Thompson has advised that bids are to be received in about two weeks and that the Public Roads Administration is most anxious to proceed with the project. If further time is taken to make revised designs Mr. McDonald² might blame this Commission for delaying the project."

Professor Hudnut commented by saying, "Suppose he does say that we held him up two or three months or three years? Does it injure us?"

Mr. Peets replied, "Yes" —architects and builders would not be in sympathy with delaying a project of this character. Prof. Hudnut said, "We won't worry about public presentation; it would not get you to first base. I stopped doing that 30 years ago." Professor Belluschi said: "If I may make some comment more or less on the same order that you did, Dean Hudnut, first of all it would be better if we didn't get into a fight without really having fairly good arguments and one that will not prove that we are trying to deliberately delay the progress. But first of all, as to bids, that is fine. They are out for being advertised and probably bids will come in in two weeks. It would be perfectly proper, and it has been done, if it would not result in any extra cost, if they took the two or three lowest bidders and tell them very frankly and say, "Now we want from you additions or reductions of doing this and this change," which in my mind are

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Mr. Post said, "Yes, there is a great deal in that. It has been very disappointing to me that they have pressed this job as little as they have since we had our conference with Mr. Horne. But in the absence of Mr. Thompson there was no one in authority to speak for the Office of National Capital Parks. Thompson was advised that bids are to be received in about two weeks and that the Public Roads Administration is most anxious to proceed with the project. It further time is taken to make revised designs Mr. McDonald might blame this Commission

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still minor so far as the whole body of the bridge is concerned. They have the foundation which is really the most expensive of it, and the railing, which is a detail; such items would not cause much delay. Those matters could easily be handled with contractors.

The other fact that you mentioned, Mr. McDonald said that there was an approval given by the previous Commission. That point might be a vulnerable point, but it seems to me that this Commission must use its own judgment and all it stands for, and must say whether something is faulty or following in the pattern of people who are not ourselves.

As to the fact that this is the last bridge in a group, I could not think that just the fact that the other ones are built would have any effect on improving this one. If they were built wrong in your opinion, that should not affect this bridge. So it seems to me that this issue here is one that needs to be settled.

We have been lenient for two years now in always saying they don't know yet that we mean business and we kept pointing to the day when they really would find out that we mean business. They should find out before going ahead and advertising for bids and getting the thing completed that they will have to get our approval; and unless we make a stand somewhere, they are going to continue to do that because they won't take us seriously.

Now, I think that that is the reason that I would say, let us make a stand now rather than next time. They should at least try to embody suggestions that we make. We don't want to delay their project, but they should tell us at least why they cannot make this or that change.

Professor Hudnut remarked, "I think that this is the basic fact in this whole situation. If they wish to collaborate with us, they could do so. They don't wish to do so. They just dismiss all our suggestions as impossible. They throw dust in the air. It is unfriendly and I think we should regard it so."

Chairman Finley stated, "I am sorry about delaying the project, but I think the time has come when we must give them an ultimatum and say that hereafter regardless of what the delay is, we must have our requirements complied with or you do not get our approval even conditionally. I think that changes that can be made ought to be made."

Professor Hudnut remarked, Take the question of removing the random ashlar. They would not reach that point for a year when they have to put that on. There is all that time to devise something else, to get alternate bids and make some changes.

Professor Belluschi said, "If they make an award to a low bidder on a plan, then they have no recourse. But if they say to two or three of the low bidders,

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we are proposing certain changes and we must know what it will cost to make them, then the low bidders will take notice, and a final award can be made accordingly."

Mr. Peets said, "It wasn't so much a matter of the time required to make the design as the time required to revise the drawings and the specifications. They have all their stencils cut and are prepared to go ahead with the project; and MacDonald was very strongly against and postponement of the date, and he was stronger on that than Thompson was."

Professor Belluschi remarked, The Public Roads people are extremely powerful. They have more money to spend than everybody else, and everybody else yields to them because they have so much power.

Professor Hudnut remarked, "If we have no influence or authority, let us fold up and let them have the country, but as long as we have something to fight for, let us stand up for it."

Chairman Finley stated, "No matter how powerful they are or think they are, if we pass on plans at all, we should insist on our requirements being complied with and it would not worry me in the least if the Public Roads Administration wished to challenge our authority. I would be glad to have a show-down with them. I would have said, All right, we will have a show-down and have it on this bridge."

Mr. Peets said, "My feeling was that, as I have said, that the situation was a very unfavorable one for a fight and they had successfully got on the best battleground with the most troops and seriously it would be very difficult to make a fight. If we didn't make a fight, the thing to do was to make an immediate withdrawal from our position, not to prolong it and make it a halfway approval and halfway disapproval but to come out immediately with a chance of withdrawal of the letter at least of our previous action and thereby prevent a fight at this time.

Chairman Finley replied, "I agree entirely with that position in this case, under the circumstances, but I think that we can lay down conditions under which

we are proposing certain changes and we must know what it will cost to make them, then the low bidders will take notice, and a final award can be made accordingly."

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we will consider any future case and say that the Commission will not promise to give immediate decision on any case submitted to us. It must be submitted sufficiently far in advance so it can be considered at least at two meetings of the Commission if we choose to. We will give them a decision after the second meeting when the members have had opportunity to study it and think about it. In other words, we will not be rushed on any future decisions because I feel as strongly as anyone that we cannot submit to having people come in at the last minute and say, 'We must have an affirmative decision today'."

Professor Hudnut said, "I don't like to be unpleasant but I have to go on record as voting 'No' on that. I am for a fight now. I would like to be so recorded,—have a showdown now."

Mr. de Weldon said, I think we should consider the overall picture, it is a defense highway. This is the last link in a very important defense highway, which links Washington with New York. We should consider the overall point of view, which is very important. You have to consider how difficult traffic is in Baltimore and in an emergency it is very necessary that that particular highway is completed as soon as possible. The fault of course is that the plans were submitted so late to the Fine Arts Commission. They had plenty of time to show us their preliminary sketches."

Chairman Finley stated, "The original letter sent to Mr. Thompson gave notice of changes we suggested, and that they were to submit a revised design. As to the second letter, I was under the impression the members had considered the draft that was sent to them, and that we were all of the opinion that we didn't want to delay the project, and gave conditional approval to the design, it being understood they would incorporate the changes we suggested that did not involve undue delay. I hope in sending the letter that I didn't act contrary to what the unanimous opinion of the Commission is. It may be my fault if I sent a letter that all of you don't like. Would it be satisfactory that

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we tell Mr. Thompson this morning that it was a conditional approval, conditioned on his incorporating these changes that we have recommended so far as it can be done without unreasonable delay and then find out what he can incorporate?"

Mr. Peets stated: "We consider it to be quite an important part in that letter that there is an implication that they are to make such changes as can be made without serious loss of time, because I don't feel that they have lived up to that. When we were talking that day at your office, Mr. Finley, with Thompson, it was agreed that as much as he could do he would do, but he has done almost nothing on account of the absence of the bridge designer, Mr. Hausman.

"There was another factor about that conference we had with Horne and Spellman that we did not come out of the conference—the conference did not end with any agreement at all. A theoretically desirable and actually necessary method of our work is to give judgments as to what changes should be made in a plan; that there is at least agreement on the part of the submitter to consider the changes suggested and be at least somewhat disposed in favor of them. For instance, in our conference with Mr. Coe, the Municipal Architect, particularly on school designs, we have often suggested radical changes from his design, but we have discussed them on the spot and gotten his—at least his tentative approval—of our proposals, and then he has worked them out and we have found them desirable. That situation was not met in our conference with Horne. In the first place, he wasn't a person in authority. There was no person in authority there to represent the National Park Service and no agreement whatsoever as to a favorable attitude toward our suggestions. So that when Thompson got back, the situation was rather shocking to him because he had not prepared himself for such a course of action. I notice the Bridge item is the last on the Agenda, scheduled for 12:15. So I told Thompson that at that hour we were looking forward to a discussion of any principles that we can lay down which will ward off these differences of opinion in the future concerning a design."

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At 12:15 p.m. the Commission discussed further the question of design of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway Bridge with Messrs. Thompson, Vint, Sager, Annese, and Housmann, of the National Park Service, and set forth principles to be observed and method of procedure to be followed in the future, in the matter of submitting designs to the Commission of Fine Arts (Exhibit B)

3. PUBLIC LIBRARY, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: Chairman Finley stated:

"I have really nothing official to bring before the Commission on this subject, except that I had a request from Mr. Almon C. Whiting, a retired architect who lives in Washington and has lived abroad a good deal. He was very much concerned that the design that was published in the paper or at least the design he saw in the paper somewhere of the addition to the Carnegie Library at 9th and K Streets and felt that not only was the park spoiled but it was not fair to the building that was there at present. He brought in a rendering of what he considered would be a suitable addition to it. He asked if I would show it to you for your information. There is really no action to be taken on it except that I told him that I would bring this drawing in to show to the Commission. He felt that the two wings proposed in the drawing would be desirable."

Professor Belluschi said, "We made quite a stand against such a thing."

Professor Hudnut said, "Aren't we in danger of having this same thing come up again? Aren't they going to bring up a set of blueprints ready to build and should not we caution them that we reserve the right to disapprove it; that we disapprove any enlargement of the building on that site. It takes up park area on the square and we are opposed to such a thing."

Chairman Finley said, "I should like to take that stand myself. I would like to further take the stand that if one segment of the Public Library has been erected on Pennsylvania Avenue, it is much too late for the present Librarian to change that plan. I think they should use that building, adapt it to whatever is necessary and build the other sections of it according to the latest library requirement. But I don't think it is a sensible idea just to abandon that and say that we are going to build an entirely new building on this park because the present librarian doesn't like the design of the building built ten years ago. I think that would be a perfectly sensible position to take and

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ten years ago. I think that would be a perfectly sensible position to take and

one that the Fine Arts Commission could uphold.

The Secretary was asked if he could give information as to the present status of the project, and he said:

"It is in an unsettled state. I had a talk with Mr. Coe, the Municipal Architect, a few days ago. We talked quite at length on the subject. Mr. Coe said the design he submitted was intended to be a preliminary sketch. I informed him that the District Commissioners were trying to get money for the project, and that this is now pending in the Budget Bureau for the 1954 Budget; as much as \$150,000 is being asked for the preparation of drawings. Mr. Coe said the erection of a big building, with stores on the main floor and library facilities up stairs is being considered. I can probably obtain information as to the 1954 Budget Item through one of my friends in the Budget Bureau."

Accordingly, Chairman Finley asked the Secretary to endeavor to obtain information as to the 1954 Budget Item. The drawing submitted by Mr. Whiting was returned to him.

4. FOGGY BOTTOM DEVELOPMENT: The Secretary presented a photostat copy of a newspaper report (Exhibit C) regarding a project proposed for the erection of apartment buildings on a ten acre tract at Virginia Avenue and 25th Street, N. W. largely owned by the Gas Company.

The Commission were interested to hear of this, and asked the Secretary to ascertain to what extent the provisions of the Shipstead-Luce Act would be applicable. Also, to ascertain from the National Capital Planning Commission as to what extent they would be concerned in the project.

5. HEADQUARTERS BUILDING FOR THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE: The Commission considered a design and model submitted by representatives of this Association for a headquarters building east of Scott Circle and adjacent to Fifteenth Street, Northwest. The Commission discussed the subject at length with Mr. Nagel, representing the architects. Chairman Finley stated in behalf of the Commission:

"Mr. Nagel, we appreciate your coming and we are very interested in seeing the design of this building which you are showing us. I might say that the Commission doesn't feel that it has any jurisdiction to the point where they could give you either approval or disapproval

as that the Fine Arts Commission could uphold.

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but we are very glad to have an opportunity of talking about the design of the building with you in advance and informally, to give you the benefit of any views we may have."

A copy of the discussion is attached hereto and made a part of these Minutes (Exhibit D).

6. REAR ADDITION TO THE ACACIA MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING:

Mr. John Nolen, Jr., Director of Planning of the National Capital Planning Commission, addressed the following letter to Chairman Finley:

October 17, 1952

"Dear Mr. Finley:

"The National Capital Planning Commission has directed me to secure the views of the Commission of Fine Arts on the proposal of the Acacia Mutual Life Insurance Company to construct a rear addition to its building fronting on the Capitol Grounds between New Jersey and Louisiana Avenues, which involves a change in the zoning height on the 1st and D Street frontages from 90 to 110 feet.

"Attached is a copy of a letter from the Acacia Company to the Zoning Commission outlining its proposal. The drawings submitted indicate that the addition will extend only one story, plus penthouse, above the present six stories, and that the added height will not exceed that of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board building, fronting on the west side of First Street, which is in an isolated 110-foot height district.

"Aside from the propriety of the zoning change as such, the Commission would like to have your views of the appropriateness of the higher addition as it relates to the Capitol Grounds and the purposes of the Shipstead-Luce Act.

"Would it be possible to furnish a statement on this matter in time for presentation to the Commission at its meeting on October 24, 1952.

Sincerely yours,
John Nolen, Jr.,
Director."

A copy of the letter addressed by the Acacia Mutual Life Insurance Company to the Zoning Commission was read; it is attached hereto and made a part of these Minutes (Exhibit E). A picture of the addition was presented. The Commission took note of the fact that it is proposed to have the addition be one hundred and ten feet high instead of ninety feet.

Professor Hudnut was of the opinion that if this request be granted, the owners could raise the Louisiana Avenue frontage 20 feet. However, he was informed that this facade fronting on the Capitol Grounds is controlled by Law of

but we are very glad to have an opportunity of talking about the design of the building with you in advance and informally, to give you the benefit of any views we may have."

A copy of the discussion is attached hereto and made a part of these

Minutes (Exhibit D).

6. REAR ADDITION TO THE ACACIA MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING:

Mr. John Nolan, Jr., Director of Planning of the National Capital Planning Commission, addressed the following letter to Chairman Finley:

October 17, 1952

"Dear Mr. Finley:

"The National Capital Planning Commission has directed me to secure the views of the Commission of Fine Arts on the proposal of the Acacia Mutual Life Insurance Company to construct a rear addition to its building fronting on the Capitol Grounds between New Jersey and Louisiana Avenues, which involves a change in the existing height on the lot and D Street frontages from 90 to 110 feet. Attached is a copy of a letter from the Acacia Company to the Zoning Commission outlining its proposal. The drawings submitted indicate that the addition will extend only one story, plus penthouse, above the present six stories, and that the added height will not exceed that of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board building, fronting on the west side of First Street, which is in an isolated 110-foot height district.

"Aside from the propriety of the zoning change as such, the Commission would like to have your views of the appropriateness of the higher addition as it relates to the Capitol Grounds and the purposes of the Shipstead-Luce Act. Would it be possible to furnish a statement on this matter in time for presentation to the Commission at its meeting on October 24, 1952.

Sincerely yours,
John Nolan, Jr.,
Director."

A copy of the letter addressed by the Acacia Mutual Life Insurance Company

to the Zoning Commission was read; it is attached hereto and made a part of

these Minutes (Exhibit E). A picture of the addition was presented. The Commission took note of the fact that it is proposed to have the addition be one-

hundred and ten feet high instead of ninety feet.

Professor Hahn was of the opinion that if this request be granted, the

owners could raise the Louisiana Avenue frontage 20 feet. However, he was in-

formed that this facade fronting on the Capitol Grounds is controlled by law of

Congress, and could not be changed by the Zoning Commission.

Thereby, on motion properly moved and seconded, the design was approved.

Mr. Nolen was informed accordingly (Exhibit F).

7. PLAN OF OUR NATION'S CAPITAL: The Secretary presented a copy of a publication, which he had received from Brig. Gen. Bernard L. Robinson, Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia. It is a report proposing District of Columbia projects, for a six year program, to cost \$350,000,000. The Commission were pleased to see the document and asked if General Robinson would please supply each member of the Commission with a copy.

8. DESIGNS FOR RESIDENCES, 8226 and 8232, West Beach Drive, Northwest.

(Case No. 1522, submitted September 29, 1952, under the Shipstead-Luce Act)

The Commission were in conference with the builder of these proposed houses,

Mr. Ledwith. He stated:

"These are to be 2 one-story buildings. What I am asking for is reconsideration and permission to use stone work on those five houses on West Beach Drive in conjunction with brick for the following reason: These houses are in the 8200 block of West Beach Drive. There are houses that have just been constructed, finished just a short time ago in which there is stone used. I have pictures of those houses with me. These are the ones built by Wolfson Brothers. You can see these houses right here with the stone on them (showing the pictures), the same type of stone that I wish to use."

Mr. Peets said, "I went out there yesterday morning and I can testify the stone is there. Whether I thought it improved the appearance of the building might be another question."

Mr. Ledwith stated he was allowed to use brick and stone on buildings he built at Sixteenth Street and Alaska Avenue about a year ago and that he could not understand why he could not use the same material now.

A lengthy discussion followed. Professor Belluschi said it destroys a unity of design to have different building material on a facade and Professor Hudnut felt the same way about this matter. He also disliked the idea of having a moderately bad design for the sake of business; he felt the use of stone

Congress, and could not be changed by the zoning Commission.

Thereby, on motion properly moved and seconded, the design was approved.

Mr. Nolan was informed accordingly (Exhibit F).

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publication, which he had received from Brig. Gen. Bernard L. Robinson, Engineer

Commissioner of the District of Columbia. It is a report proposing District of

Columbia projects for a six year program, to cost \$350,000,000. The Commission

are pleased to see the document and asked if General Robinson would please sup-

ply each member of the Commission with a copy.

8. PLANS FOR RESIDENCES, 8230 and 8232, West Beach Drive, Northwest.

(Case No. 1522, submitted September 29, 1951, under the Shipstead-Luce Act)

The Commission were in conference with the builder of these proposed houses,

Mr. Ledwith. He stated:

"These are to be 2 one-story buildings. What I am asking for is reconsideration and permission to use stone work on those five houses on West Beach Drive in conjunction with brick for the following reason: These houses are in the 8200 block of West Beach Drive. There are houses that have just been constructed, finished just a short time ago in which there is stone used. I have pictures of these houses with me. These are the ones built by Wolfson Brothers. You can see these houses right here with the stone on them (showing the pictures), the same type of stone that I wish to use."

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stone is there. Whether I thought it improved the appearance of the building

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built at Sixteenth Street and Alaska Avenue about a year ago and that he could

not understand why he could not use the same material now.

A lengthy discussion followed. Professor Ballenbach said it destroys a

unity of design to have different building material on a facade and Professor

Whitcomb felt the same way about this matter. He also disliked the idea of pay-

ing a moderately bad design for the sake of business; he felt the use of stone

with brick as proposed on these residences is "very bad."

The Commission finally agreed to approve the design—Professor Belluschi voting in dissent. Mr. Ledwith thereupon agreed to build one of these houses "all red brick."

Mr. Ledwith suggested that the Commission arrange for a conference with architects and builders so as to publicize the desires of the Commission in the matter of design and use of material for buildings coming within the jurisdiction of the Shipstead-Luce Act area.

9. MISCELLANEOUS SHIPSTEAD-LUCE ACT SUBMISSIONS: The Commission considered the following sets of designs submitted by the Director of Inspection of the District of Columbia, and took action as indicated:

- (a) Erect two-story building at 1604 Portal Drive, N. W. (Case No. 1520, submitted September 16, 1952) Approved.
- (b) Erect two-story building at 1712 Portal Drive, N. W. (Case No. 1521, submitted September 16, 1952) Approved.
- (c) Remove front porch and construct new brick stoop at 19 Second Street, N. E. (Case No. 1526, submitted October 21, 1952) Approved.
- (d) Construct masonry retaining wall at 8232 West Beach Drive, N. W. (Case No. 1527, submitted October 22, 1952) Approved.
- (e) Erect two-story building at 1634 Portal Drive, N. W. (Case No. 1528, submitted October 23, 1952) Approved.

The Director of Inspection was notified as to the action taken with reference to these submissions.

10. GOVERNMENT AND ART: During the afternoon the Commission considered the proposed Report on Government and Art. The Secretary presented a sample galley proof of three pages, submitted by the Government Printing Office at the request of the Commission, to illustrate a format which the Printing Office would consider suitable, namely, a ten-point type and about a 9 x 12 page, with appropriate subject headings. This was inspected and approved. It was noted that the ten-point type was used in the Canadian Report on Government and Art; it is used generally for documents.

with brick as proposed on these residences is "very bad."

The Commission finally agreed to approve the design—Professor Bellaschi voting in dissent. Mr. Ladwith thereupon agreed to build one of these houses

"All red brick."

Mr. Ladwith suggested that the Commission arrange for a conference with

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the matter of design and use of material for buildings coming within the jurisdic-

tion of the Shipstead-Luce Act area.

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sidered the following sets of designs submitted by the Director of Inspection

of the District of Columbia, and took action as indicated:

- (a) Erect two-story building at 1804 Portal Drive, N. W. (Case No. 1530, submitted September 16, 1932) Approved.
- (b) Erect two-story building at 1712 Portal Drive, N. W. (Case No. 1531, submitted September 16, 1932) Approved.
- (c) Remove front porch and construct new brick stoop at 19 Second Street, N. E. (Case No. 1532, submitted October 21, 1932) Approved.
- (d) Construct masonry retaining wall at 8232 West Beach Drive, N. W. (Case No. 1537, submitted October 22, 1932) Approved.
- (e) Erect two-story building at 1634 Portal Drive, N. W. (Case No. 1535, submitted October 23, 1932) Approved.

The Director of Inspection was notified as to the action taken with re-

ference to these submissions.

10. GOVERNMENT AND ART: During the afternoon the Commission considered

the proposed Report on Government and Art. The Secretary presented a sample galley proof of three pages, submitted by the Government Printing Office at the

request of the Commission, to illustrate a format which the Printing Office

would consider suitable, namely, a ten-point type and about a 9 x 12 page, with

appropriate subject headings. This was inspected and approved. It was noted

that the ten-point type was used in the Canadian Report on Government and Art;

it is used generally for documents.

The Commission felt that, as far as the cover and size of page is concerned, it might be desirable to use a style of cover and size of page similar to that used in the document published by the Commission on the "Fortieth Anniversary" of its establishment in 1950, but further consideration is to be given the matter.

The Secretary reported that the sum of \$3,000 is available to print the Report on Government and Art, which includes plating and 1,000 copies for the use of the Commission. It will then be possible for Congress to secure 50,000 copies or more simply for the cost of printing.

Indications are that it will be about a 150-page document. Professor Hudnut stated that the Introduction which he is writing (and will have ready by about December 1st) will be about 5,000 words in length, or about 20 printed pages, to comprise Part I. Part II, the Summary, which is in mimeograph form, will comprise about 110 printed pages. Part III, the Recommendations, probably 10 or 15 pages; and an Index if desired.

The Secretary presented and read a brief draft containing suggestions made by the Witnesses, as taken from the Summary (Exhibit G).

Chairman Finley asked that each member of the Commission present a series of Recommendations for the Report, at the next meeting of the Commission, December 12th, and it was decided to devote the afternoon of that day for consideration of them.

11. NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS: The Commission decided to hold their next meeting in Washington on Friday, December 12, 1952.

The Commission adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

The Commission felt that, as far as the cover and size of page is concerned, it might be desirable to use a style of cover and size of page similar to that used in the document published by the Commission on the "Warfare and the Navy" of its establishment in 1945, but further consideration is to be given the matter.

The Secretary reported that the sum of \$3,000 is available to print the Report on Government and War, which includes printing and 1,000 copies for the use of the Commission. It will then be possible for Congress to secure 50,000 copies or more simply for the cost of printing.

Indications are that it will be about a 150-page document. Professor Mahan stated that the introduction which he is writing (and will have ready by about December 1st) will be about 5,000 words in length, or about 80 printed pages, to comprise Part I. Part II, the summary, which is in manuscript form, will comprise about 110 printed pages. Part III, the recommendations, probably 10 or 15 pages; and an Index is desired.

The Secretary presented and read a brief draft containing suggestions made by the witnesses, as taken from the Summary (Exhibit 2). Chairman Finley asked that each member of the Commission present a series of recommendations for the Report, at the next meeting of the Commission, December 12th, and it was decided to devote the afternoon of that day for consideration of them.

11. NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON THE WAR: The Commission decided to hold their next meeting in Washington on Friday, December 12, 1945.

The Commission adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

C O P Y

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

October 3, 1952

Dear Mr. Thompson:

I was very glad to have the opportunity of meeting with you on October 2nd and discussing the status of the Anacostia Bridge project.

As I understand it, the changes recommended in the Commission's letter of September 24th would probably not increase the construction cost of the bridge but would involve a delay of several months beyond the date on which completion was promised in asking Congress for the appropriation.

In view of the latter circumstance, this Commission withdraws its request for a new study and asks only for such of the suggested modifications as, in your opinion, can be incorporated in the plans without critical delay in the completion of the bridge.

We feel, however, that our recommendations should remain on record as a guide in the design of future constructions of a similar nature. We fully appreciate that many of the points brought out in this case ought to be studied and defined as general guiding principles. If these can be agreed upon before designs are made, much time would be saved.

For example, we are sympathetic with your statement that a granite facing reduces glare and causes a bridge to stand out less conspicuously from the surrounding landscape. We believe, however, that there are ways in which these objectives can be harmonized with a basic principle of contemporary architecture--which is that the exterior of a building should express, or at least not misrepresent, its construction.

We will be glad, at some convenient time, to confer with you about such an approach to this and similar problems.

Sincerely yours,

Sgd.

David E. Finley
Chairman

Mr. Harry T. Thompson
Associate Superintendent
National Capital Parks
Department of the Interior
Washington D. C.

cc to: Mr. H. P. Caemmerer, Secretary,
Commission of Fine Arts.

def/mfk

EXHIBIT A

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

October 3, 1952

Dear Mr. Thompson:

I was very glad to have the opportunity of meeting with you on October 2nd and discussing the status of the Anacostia Bridge project.

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Sincerely yours,

Sgt.
David E. Finley
Chairman

cc to: Mr. H. F. Gaemmerer, Secretary,
Commission of Fine Arts,
Department of the Interior
National Capital Parks
Associate Superintendent
Mr. Harry T. Thompson
Washington D. C.

del/mrk

PROCEDURES AS TO SUBMISSIONS

October 22, 1952

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: Good morning, Mr. Thompson. You have several matters you want to take up with the Commission, have you not? But first of all we would like to discuss the question of the bridge, the Anacostia Bridge Project. The Commission has been discussing that before you came in. As you know, when you came to see me and Mr. Peets was there, we realized the situation that you were then in. The Commission tried to meet your difficulties as well as we could, so that we gave a conditional approval to the bridge with the request that our suggested modifications be incorporated in the plans so far as it could be done without critically delaying the completion of the bridge.

The Commission was not at all happy about this and was disturbed by the way in which this was handled. We were particularly disturbed in having it come to us practically as a fait accompli, too late for us to offer any constructive suggestions. The Commission is determined that we will not give approval of any kind, conditional or otherwise under such circumstances again. We must have advance notice of a project of this importance. There is no reason why it should not be brought to the Commission long before a decision is asked of us and, hereafter, we shall take our time in coming to a decision, regardless of the hardship imposed on any of you gentlemen or on the public. I would like to make sure that that is understood because the Commission does not like to be put in the position where we must give approval to something that we do not agree with. May I ask if that is accepted by you?

MR. THOMPSON: It is perfectly clear to me. That is why I thought it would be advisable for a number of Park Service people who are in any way concerned directly or otherwise with the design of bridges to be present at this time in order that we may understand your respective positions thoroughly.

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CHAIRMAN FINLEY: The Commission is perfectly right to make issue of any of these points. We thought in this instance it would inconvenience the public and that you had other projects which are hinging on this one and would also be delayed. But after giving this warning, we want to state now that we are not going to be so lenient the next time.

Nov, Mr. Thompson, I would like to ask you, because the Commission is very much interested in knowing, what have you done about trying to incorporate these changes which we suggested?

MR. THOMPSON: I would not belabor your Commission with all of the things that were said when we were together. I presume that you passed on some of the reasons why we felt that it would be a hardship to hold up progress on this bridge at this time and start re-studying it on the basis of your suggestions. I do think I ought to report that we have received your letter and I want to thank you for your very generous and understanding method of handling this situation with us. We do appreciate it very much. Our architect, Mr. Houseman, who designed the structure, together with the structural engineers of the Public Roads Administration, had just recently returned from Europe -- as you may or may not know -- just this week, having been absent from the country for the past three months.

The plans--again, as you may know--have been distributed, some 15 copies, to prospective bidders. The bids are to be received on the sixth of next month. The Contractors are now in the process of assembling their bids. We have no way of knowing at this time what can or cannot be done. I have accepted this second letter and I have attached your first letter to it with the firm intention of going through it item by item. Your first letter set forth your point of view to us. We cannot tell what can or cannot be done until we get our bids. Then we must go back to the successful bidder and present him with a proposition as to what would be entailed costwise or delay-wise, to see if we can accomplish the changes that you suggested be done.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: The Commission is perfectly right to make issue of any of these points. We thought in this instance it would inconvenience the public and that you had other projects which are hinging on this one and would also be delayed. But after giving this warning, we want to state now that we are not going to be so lenient the next time.

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I think at this time we can say without question that we can accomplish the item about striping of the concrete forms; that is the substitution of the unfinished type of concrete for the now square pattern concrete which our design indicates. I think I am safe in saying that that can be done without any question. We do not have to bother waiting for a submittal to the contractor on this item because I think we know at this time that it probably can be done without delay or without any appreciable delay or change in dollars.

MR. HOUSEMAN: There would be some slight increase but not much.

MR. THOMPSON: I think we can handle that. We have \$1,200,000 to cover what is estimated to be a \$1,300,000 structure, according to the best estimates that we can assimble. It may well be that the items that you have given us by way of your several-point letter of recommendations may be used to get some of our items down in cost. I also promise you as I did personally elsewhere that we will go through these items point by point and we will present each item to the contractor. If it comes within our dollar limitation we will make every effort to live up to the suggestions that you have made. I do not know whether that is satisfactory, or whether that answers your questions or not.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: Would you like to make any comments?

MR. HUDNUT: No; I think under the circumstances that is as much as we could expect.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: Well, we hope you will be able to accomplish something in that way.

MR. THOMPSON: We hope that we can. I have accepted your letter exactly in the same spirit in which it was written. I think it is quite a concession on the part of your Commission to the Park Service. It is a gesture of helpfulness. Your most recent letter is only part of the letter which I shall attempt to follow. As I mentioned to you earlier, we will make every effort to meet those requirements if it is within our power to do so.

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MR. HUDNUT: The issue hinges on whether you understand the intents and the comments and desire to help us, or whether you wish to find reasons for not helping us. You could easily find reasons, economic or personal, or this or that for denying accepting all those recommendations. I am sure you could do it. It is just a matter of cleverness; so the whole thing hinges on what we believe to be your, if I may speak bluntly, your good faith in desiring to help us and help the public through us as we have no interest personally, of course.

MR. THOMPSON: I pledge you the good faith of our office in doing everything and I won't attempt to report back the record, but I do think those who have watched our operations over the past many years will say that our intentions have been good in the past and we do not intend to vary from that.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: The important thing is to let us know ahead of time next time, sufficiently far in advance so that you are not put in an embarrassing position by any recommendations we might make. That has been the misfortune of this case. Well, then, gentlemen, if you will try to carry out those recommendations, we will let the matter stand. We really stand on our first letter. The gist of the second letter is that we want to make it possible for you to go ahead and not delay.

MR. THOMPSON: We all thank you for that.

MR. BELLUSCHI: Mr. Chairman, is it clear whether the recommendations -

MR. THOMPSON: They were clearly defined. There were six or seven points, but they were clearly defined and explained so that I am quite sure that we understand what you intended to say.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: All right, then. Shall we pass on to the next item?

MR. THOMPSON: I have nothing further at this time. Mr. Peets may probably have something to add to the discussion.

MR. PEETS: Having settled this matter, the last suggestion made in our letter is that we should get together on the general principles involved here

MR. HUNTER: The issue hinges on whether you understand the interests and the comments and desire to help us, or whether you wish to find reasons for not helping us. You could easily find reasons, economic or personal, or this or that for denying accepting all those recommendations. I am sure you could do it. It is just a matter of cleverness; so the whole thing hinges on what we believe to be your, if I may speak bluntly, your good faith in desiring to help us and help the public through us as we have no interest personally, of course.

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MR. THOMPSON: I have nothing further at this time. Mr. Peets may probably have something to add to the discussion.

MR. PEETS: Having settled this matter, the last suggestion made in our letter is that we should get together on the general principles involved here

and try to adopt policies which can guide future designing in the direction of harmonious grouping of bridges that come within proximity to each other, and treating the matter as a general theoretical consideration rather than specifically. The heart of the matter is the question of using stone veneers on bridge construction in parkways on the theory that such construction is more appropriate to the parkways, more harmonious with the green lawns and the trees. That is the principle that has guided the Park Service, I believe, in the past, in designing parkway bridges. We have some criticism of that procedure from the point of view of modern architecture, I would say, and I feel that those criticisms should be stated. At the same time an effort should be made to get the qualities that the landscape architects had in mind when they suggested stone veneer, to get those results and still be within the principles of modern architecture. I believe it can be done and we have at least a few moments to initiate such a discussion. We can continue it later with a smaller group, perhaps, and come to a statement of policy.

MR. THOMPSON: If it would be any help — and I do not know that it would — I do have here a series of photographs of the principal bridges in the Washington area, all following the same general trend started more than one hundred years ago. Stone facing ~~which~~ has been used in almost every instance, as we have found it in the past. If there are new concepts, new requirements, new ideas that ought to be accepted, and old patterns of design dropped, we all ought to have the benefit of your advice.

MR. PEETS: Would you say that the reasons for using the stone veneer relate to a harmony of appearance between the hard construction and the planting, the lawns and shrubbery and the trees; that the purpose was to make the concrete construction less conspicuous, to make it compete in conspicuousness to a less degree with the planting? I am hoping, Mr. Thompson, that you will pick this up at any moment and say that that was the reason, or that there are other reasons.

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at any moment and say that that was the reason, or that there are other reasons.

MR. THOMPSON: I was expecting that.

MR. PEETS: Then there is the matter of scale. The appearance of stone construction breaks down the scale of the composition so as to make it harmonious with the finer scale of the foliage. Yes, you can say those two things, color and scale are the things to look for in order to harmonize the bridge construction with the landscape development, and those are important objectives. The question is, can they be reconciled with sound architecture?

MR. THOMPSON: I think rather than for me to try to explain what has been done in the past and why, it would be to our advantage if the Commission could give us a directional trend which you think we should follow in the future. What I might say would be in the nature of an excuse for what has happened. I don't think we are interested in excuses. Excuses are not going to help very much in determining future requirements. If your advice could suggest the kind of design criteria, point to examples as to the kind of structure that you think would be more acceptable, then we would have at least some notion as to where to make a beginning.

MR. HUDNUT: I will venture a first principle. The bridge must be first of all a fine piece of engineering and must look like a piece of engineering. It must tell its story as steel or reinforced concrete; and there should be no prettifications or dolling it up with anything that will interfere in any way with the story that it tells as engineering. But the engineering can have form. It can have proportion. It can have good lines, good relations of mass and space, and still be engineering, and it is not necessary at all, if I may disagree with you, to make it harmonize with the landscape. That will occur of itself. It is a fine piece of engineering set in a landscape and the architect does not have to prettify it to make it look like shrubbery or to harmonize it with shrubbery. Almost all these bridges, in my judgment, compromise by the addition of extraneous elements to the engineering, either architectural or landscape architecture or decorations of some kind; whereas, if they would

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simply tell their story, let them be girders and beams, but civilized -- give them form, rhythm -- then you would have an excellent bridge. You have an excellent bridge over the river, the new Highway Bridge over the Potomac that runs beside the old one. What makes that bridge so beautiful. It is just simply a straightforward honest statement of girder and pier construction; it has that line, plus simplicity by careful spacing of the piers to make that bridge beautiful. It does not have to have any surface treatment; does not have to have any of those things. I am a professor of architecture so I speak like a professor, but I feel very strongly about that. The main trouble with the bridge you showed us is that there has been tried to be a compromise on the one hand with the architects and on the other hand with the landscape architect whereas it is essentially a piece of engineering.

MR. THOMPSON: You do not impugn the use of stone?

MR. HUDNUT: Not if it is called for by the conditions of the site and the thing to be done. I would like stone piers, if you can afford them, great granite piers.

MR. THOMPSON: The bridge you refer to is a simple assembly of granite piers with steel girders.

MR. HUDNUT: They are real granite piers and not just an application of something to make it look pretty. Now a piece of bad design in my judgment is the use of the draw bridge of the Memorial Bridge which is given a stone form in the middle.

MR. THOMPSON: The bascule span?

MR. HUDNUT: They even have an iron girder to look like stone. That is atrocious, even though it carries the architectural lines across. An honest-to-goodness drawbridge designed by good engineering would be much more desirable and satisfactory, much more beautiful.

MR. THOMPSON: One bridge of concrete is the Key Bridge, a major structure.

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MR. HUDNUT: Yes.

MR. THOMPSON: I do not know whether you would agree with me but I think that is a very handsome structure.

MR. HUDNUT: I think so.

MR. THOMPSON: So that you can build a bridge of concrete and —

MR. HUDNUT: If you have to use concrete, because of economic requirements, make it frankly and honest-to-goodness concrete.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: Would you like to add something?

MR. BELLUSCHI: I do not know. I would have a feeling that it is rather dangerous to lay down principles which can be grossly misinterpreted later on. I agree with you very wholeheartedly, but I think that if it takes at least five years for an architecture student to understand even the beginnings of principles of design, and a lot of people take a lifetime to understand the principle and say, this is it — I wish it was that way. It would be more simple. But I think probably what we are talking of, Mr. Peets and Mr. Hudnut, is that there are two things, clarity and unity which I think we have been after, not only in this but in architecture as well, the clarity as to what the purpose is and unity so that you are not breaking it up with other things. Personally, I feel that if the piers were all stone, rubble stone, if they were unified so that there would be the idea that there is a bridge and not trying to make a mask or a face, that is why I insisted the other time that I wanted to know why they were there and they said to protect against erosion. If that is the case, then where there is erosion, where does it occur? It occurs all around, and I think there might be a reason for granite at water level rather than having it at the front. But I am very hesitant in announcing a principle other than clarity and unity which is the thing that can apply to things so broadly, can apply perhaps at very small risk to be challenged. That is all I have to say.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: Mr. de Weldon, do you want to add anything?

MR. HUDNUT: Yes.

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the thing that can apply to things so broadly, can apply perhaps at very small

risk to be challenged. That is all I have to say.

CHAIRMAN FINNEY: Mr. de Weldon, do you want to add anything?

MR. DE WELDON: I think we should all consider the bridge from the pictorial view in harmony with the location, which I think is very important, not only from a structural point of view. The human form has structure; we have all the bones and so on, but we don't carry them on the outside.

MR. BELLUSCHI: You must have read Mr. Hudnut's book.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: If there is nothing from this end of the table—

MR. HUDNUT: It makes me think of the anatomy student who said to his girl, "Darling, I love every bone in your head."

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: Would you like to say something or add something?

MR. VINT: I think this is all very interesting.

MR. THOMPSON: I hope that you would let us have a copy of the record of this meeting, if they are in detailed enough form, so that you will at least have something that we could use as a guide. I should think Mr. Peets might have something to say in this regard. We have talked about this same subject back and forth many times

MR. PEETS: I expected the landscape architects to defend and explain and help us to separate the essential things from the accidental or the variable elements.

MR. THOMPSON: Perhaps all we would be doing would be repeating history and making excuses for what has been done in the past.

MR. PEETS: No, no; learning by the past is always justified. How about the color?

MR. BELLUSCHI: I think the color is important. A concrete mixture is perfectly sound whether you use a certain kind of cement, or a certain kind of sand which gives almost a warm color, which certainly makes it attractive.

MR. PEETS: Are there not any surface colors that you would think allowable?

MR. BELLUSCHI: Veneer?

MR. PEETS: Would you agree with the statement that in a large park if the concrete constructions are just pure engineering, they become unduly conspicuous,

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which gives almost a warm color, which certainly makes it attractive.

MR. PEETS: Are there not any similar colors that you would think allowable?

MR. BELLUSCHI: Varies?

MR. PEETS: Would you agree with the statement that in a large part of the

concrete constructions are just pure engineering, they become unduly conspicuous,

That they detach themselves from the general landscape and they would --

MR. BELLUSCHI: What Dean Hudnut was careful to say is that it is a rare person who can do engineering, be it a pure piece of engineering, and still be a very unified and very attractive thing. As a matter of fact, he has an assumption which was rather good, that the work of a good engineer is always a very fine work, gives fine results, which is expressed in the concrete and the other materials. But when engineers have been imaginative and really explore their function to the limit and not be tied down to what has been done before, comes out as pretty exciting answer. So I think that that is what he had in mind, and I think we can say that there are several ways of solving engineering problems, one of which might be the very best-looking. That would be ideal, of course. The bridge by Maillart is a very beautiful piece of engineering and very imaginative and very esthetically satisfying.

MR. PEETS: If you were designing ten bridges for a large Parkway, meeting all kinds of different spans and heights and widths and functions, would you design each one of those bridges separately according to the engineering factors involved or would you --

MR. BELLUSCHI: If those conditions varied as much as you indicated chances are I would but probably in the Parkways the conditions are very similar, like the freeways up in Maine, the same overpass which has almost exactly the same condition, and the solution should be the same. But if you say like in Rock Creek where you have rocks on both sides or they have a plain or this or that condition, there could be a different solution.

MR. PEETS: There could be some harmony running through it.

MR. BELLUSCHI: This shows probably the same material but shows where the water line is up and down, shows where it would be perfectly logical to have a different material where the water line occurs. This is the thing that Dean Hudnut is opposed to because really it isn't, those are, I venture to say, they

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are not arches probably and certainly not stone arches and the stone just is very obviously veneer and not too honest a veneer and I don't think that carries any virtue in connection with the landscape.

MR. PEETS: Do we understand that as far as I am concerned, I don't like the design as it is. What I am looking for is something that has esthetic value without violating --

MR. HUDNUT: Do you see any esthetic value in this--showing photo--?

MR. PEETS: Yes.

MR. HUDNUT: Do you think it is one of the most beautiful things in Washington?

MR. PEETS: It has some fine qualities.

MR. HUDNUT: I don't think the Arlington Memorial bridge is better. This is a very nice bridge for the time of Napoleon.

MR. PEETS: Curved lines will never go out of fashion. I like what Maillart, the Swiss engineer, did. They are wonderful just as such and the landscape.

MR. BELLUSCHI: This is a good example. This arch here is concrete, I take it. It is all divided up to look like ashlar, like stone which it isn't.

MR. HOUSEMAN: That is stone.

MR. BELLUSCHI: All stone? What is the structure of this?

MR. VINT: Concrete on stone.

MR. BELLUSCHI: Then it is concrete of which you have, completely obliterated the significance of and put what is in fact a false veneer to show I do not know what exactly, but you then proceeded to fill this up with a tremendous weight. Of course I suppose the bridge is counterbalanced at that, but if this is the structure and this is supported, there could have been a way of making that light and extremely interesting, but it started with a preconceived idea of what the bridge should look like from an architectural point of view rather than solving from a purely creative and engineering point of view. That is the discrepancy,

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what we all in the Commission I think agree is not a very good approach, although we understand very clearly what you are up against and there might be some difficulty in acceptance by the public, but nevertheless, if it was really good and if you really had a good, solid logical backing for your ideas, I think it would be accepted eventually.

MR. PEETS: That is false rustic.

MR. BELLUSCHI: The whole thing is false and nothing can help. Ninety-five percent of the people probably are not critical and they go through and by and pay no attention to it. Anyone who looks would be critical of it, look with a critical eye and say, "that is a false solution."

MR. VINT: This is in keeping with the thought of the Fine Arts Commission of the early thirties.

MR. BELLUSCHI: We all hope and think that we are progressing. We are not sure, sometimes.

MR. VINT: We are dealing with different people. I am not using that for a parachute but that is how we have been, under that influence, too.

MR. PEETS: We do not like what exists there now. If we are going to build a bridge, thought should be given to it to show that you are not making this any more absurd than it is.

MR. VINT: I don't think you can get any more bridges in there than we have now. There are a couple too many.

MR. PEETS: Well, Harry, perhaps the only thing to do is to make them out of concrete and plant Boston ivy over everything.

MR. VINT: I think with your view expressed here when we bring them in in a preliminary stage in the next case we have, show you how we come --

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: I think that is the thing to do because then we can talk it out and make suggestions that will, perhaps, be of some help in the early stages.

MR. VINT: We are in a spot and can't do much about it at the stage it is in.

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But I can say that I think we can profit by this meeting and in knowing the views of the Commission.

MR. BELLUSCHI: Mr. Thompson said before the letting of the contract you could have certain things outlined to the contractor before letting the contract. I think your cost and delay would be almost nil.

MR. VINT: We will see what we can do.

MR. THOMPSON: With your preliminary statement, I think we got a good bit out of what you have been saying and I think we understand the feeling of your Commission pretty well. I do thank you personally for your understanding or our situation in which we find ourselves.

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Washington Post Oct. 8, 1952.
On Gas Company Site

Multimillion Housing Project Planned for Foggy Bottom

(Map on Page 30)

A multimillion-dollar residential and commercial development is planned for the ten-acre site owned by the Washington Gas Light Co. in Foggy Bottom, a New York City builder announced yesterday.

A spokesman for John W. Harris Associates of New York said a syndicate composed of that firm and Washington and New York businessmen has taken an option on the land that fronts on Rock Creek Parkway at Virginia ave. A project of "of high character to cost many millions of dollars" is planned.

Neither the New York spokesman nor Oscar Berry, general counsel for the gas company, who confirmed the agreement, would reveal the price asked for the land. In 1947 about two-thirds of the property was placed on sale for three million dollars. Berry said at that time there were no takers.

When the syndicate evinced an interest in the entire parcel last month, Berry said an option price was agreed upon for the total 407,000 square feet.

The option includes the bulk of the land owned by the gas company in that area.

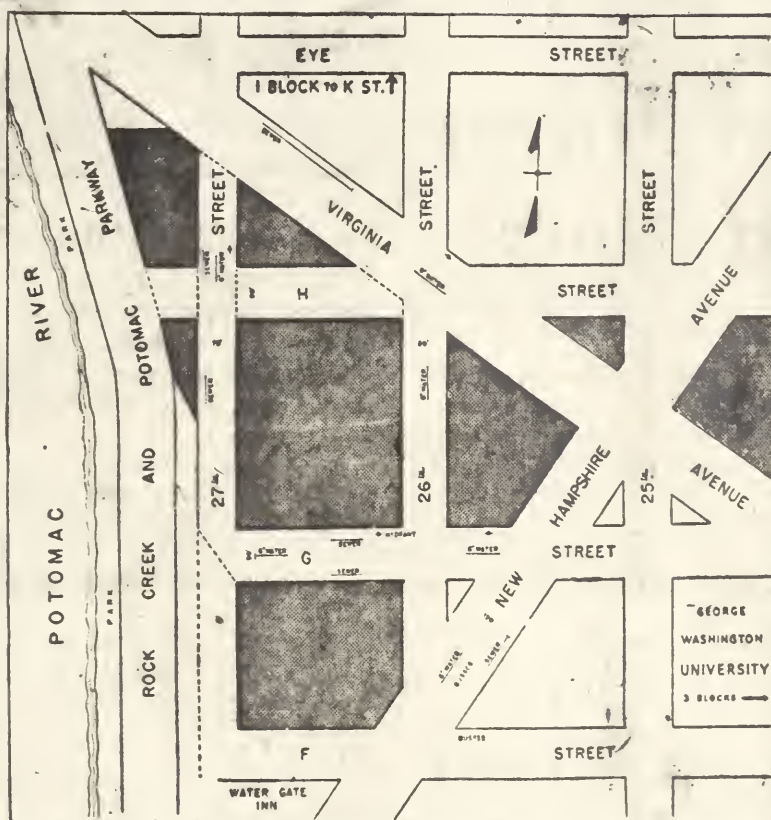
A representative of the Harris firm, builders of the Statler Hotel and Meridian Hill Hotel here, said preliminary plans for the development have been drawn but details were too "fluid" for release at this time.

The project will contain apartments and suitable commercial facilities, he said, and if the proposed development goes ahead "will be one of the largest ever undertaken in Washington."

The land is in two tracts. The bulk of the property, 287,000 square feet, is bounded by Rock Creek and Potomac parkways, Virginia ave., New Hampshire ave. and F st. nw. The other, 120,000 square feet, is bounded by 24th st., Virginia ave. and H st. nw.

THE WASHINGTON POST
Wednesday, October 8, 1952
PAGE 30

Approximately 10 acres



The shaded area on the map indicates the site of a planned multi-million-dollar residential and commercial development. The land is in two tracts. The bulk of the property, owned by the Washington Gas Light Co., is bounded by Rock Creek and Potomac parkways, Virginia ave., New Hampshire ave. and F st. nw. The other is bounded by 24th st., Virginia ave. and H st. nw. (Story on Page 1.)

DISCUSSION REGARDING DESIGN AND MODEL FOR THE
HEADQUARTERS BUILDING FOR THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

October 22, 1952

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: Mr. Nagel, we appreciate your coming and we are very interested in seeing the design of this building which you are showing us.

I might just say that the Commission doesn't feel that it has any jurisdiction to the point where they could give you either approval or disapproval but we are very glad to have an opportunity of talking about the design of the building with you in advance and just informally to give you the benefit of any views we could.

MR. NAGEL: Yes, we would like your advice and I would like to take a few minutes to tell you what we have been confronted with and what opportunities we found. What the problem generally is, is about what you would like.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: We would like that very much. Our real concern is as to how this proposed building would affect the appearance of the City in that area in relation to the little park, the monument there and to other things of public interest.

MR. NAGEL: We found very early that it was a problem finding form within this, the problem of the space here. This building, 16th Street, Scott Circle, and 15th Street -- it has the advantage of being clean cut, separate space. It doesn't adjoin and so there was some freedom of treatment.

However, we tried to find in here a form for the building which had an affinity with the space that it found itself in and to give due regard for the Circle and its powerful effects. We had originally sort of an obvious starting point come to this, sort of the solution of the building next to it. But it didn't seem really to relate to the Circle or to this standard that we wanted it to. It didn't make use of the site. It became a very narrow building and not very useful to the people who were going to be in it and by holding to the building restriction lines on these several sides, these two slanting sides are now actually the building line. It projects this way to a corner here (indicating). This corner here holds to the line at this point and this is the projection here. And here again this is the building line of this corner in such a way where we have the cut-back.

We have arrived, then, at a prismatic form which has as its center line the radial line of the circle and we feel by virtue of the fact that the sides here are parallel with the new amounts, this dominant side is parallel with the Paint and Varnish Association headquarters, that it has found its true form within this space and within the limitations of the set of lines.

It seemed a natural, then, to get away from what at first seemed the beginning point to such a form. It becomes then a symmetrical shape form and plan and from there on out it seemed to click as to what should follow in terms of the detail.

It is essentially an office building. Incidentally, the people for whom it is designed, as you may know, the National Headquarters Building for the

DISCUSSION AND DESIGN AND RECORD FOR THE
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American Association for the Advancement of Science — they will occupy at the beginning about three floors, two or three floors of it and will have the upper floors typical office floors for rental to institutions of a similar nature. Eventually they will occupy the entire building. The pent house is merely utilitarian, there not being enough space for other uses of it. We have gotten permission from the Engineer Commissioner in writing, to use the underground for parking up to the curb line so that we can accommodate about 40 cars out of sight here, underneath for the convenience of the people in the building. we have this ramp which will go down to it on this side. It takes off at a less difficult point traffic-wise for going into the building.

Our main entrance to the building, the pedestrian entrance will be on the Massachusetts Avenue side. That is the address now and I might perhaps point out that the buildings that now cover the site are owned by this organization and the headquarters are now in these buildings on this end. These are four-story brick and limestone buildings there now. The site has been owned by the Association since 1946 and before then were in the Smithsonian Institution.

That is a quick survey of the general conditions and our problems as we saw them at the beginning. I think I told Mr. Caemmerer the other day that the question of zoning use, change of use, is up before the Zoning Commission now and we have yet to hear their verdict on that. This is residential 90-foot C and the organization may possibly qualify as indicated in the zoning regulations on the basis of being a philanthropic organization or on the basis of being an educational institution. The purpose is the advancement of science and the furthering of the welfare of humanity as a result of that. So the case which the organization has made before the Zoning Board I feel has been a very powerful and worthy case in connection with using this site further as it is being used at present.

This is an area here of similar institutions. For instance, National Geographic is right here (indicating) and I have a newspaper clipping, the Evening Star made a little survey of similar institutions in the area. They did a little thinking for us and if you would like, I can give you a clipping there.

I have no photographs of this here which I could leave with you except perhaps some which the press has used and they have them in their hands. They have photographed it and they have used these in the Evening Star a few weeks ago. This is generally a view from Massachusetts Avenue here. There is in here a description somewhat of the organization itself. It has 48,000 members and it has around 250 organizations which it represents. It is quite an interesting client to design for and we have felt —

MR. BELLUSCHI: Are they satisfied?

MR. NAGEL: They like it very much. We found in this a challenge to give them something which has dignity, as they expressed it, and also has a high degree of utility. We felt that a light structure here with the core elements carefully worked toward the interior, since they don't need the natural light, the stairs, the shafts, the elevators, the toilets, and keep the periphery entirely for the use of the people.

MR. BELLUSCHI: Will it be air conditioned?

MR. NAGEL: Yes.

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MR. DEENESTER: Will it be air conditioned?

MR. WAGNER: Yes.

MR. BELLUSCHI: Double glass?

MR. NAGEL: We will have the heat absorbing glass. Whether we can afford the double, I don't know. Our mechanical engineers will advise us a little later.

MR. BELLUSCHI: Those louvers, will those be vertical supports for the louvers?

MR. NAGEL: I might bring this up in connection with that question: We are in the middle of considerable studies on the matter of control of sunlight. We have indicated in this earlier model here projections which we have found since the building inspector might not pass. In other words, if we had some substantial projections of this sort all the way around, we might have to shrink the building. This line may have to drop back to this line (indicating).

MR. BELLUSCHI: Because of the property line?

MR. NAGEL: Because of the property line but that is not quite clear because on a number of counts certain ledges, cornices, overhangs and balconies could project but that is quite a moot question. We may, our present tendency in our design thinking, come back to less of an overhang, still have horizontal projections, minor, with an accentuated course directly over the head of the window and have vertical fins to cut out the slanting rays.

The west side is this side here (indicating) which happens fortunately to be the minor side so we don't bear the brunt of the west sun but we rather welcome some windows toward the circle here because it is a fine view and we may, because of the west sun have less glass on that side although that is not fully determined. We may in fact some how get a fenestration in here which is richer than the other side so that it fully considers the circle as a dominant factor. We are going into it quite thoroughly and have gotten a tremendous amount of encouragement from the building committee and the executive director of the organization. They are quite enthusiastic about it.

MR. PEETS: Did you make a study which followed the building line all the way around the site?

MR. NAGEL: Yes, that would have meant quite a lopsided building, what I would call a truncated pie. In other words, it would be a building without any character. We would be permitted to have, I think up to 90 percent coverage so we could not have quite that. We would have to cut it off at one point. The percentage of coverage here is somewhere around 75 or 80 percent, if I am not mistaken.

MR. PEETS: I was thinking of it in terms of the planes around the building and this plane here particularly, bears no relation to any environment whereas if it would be squared up, it would be like the other four corners. Ultimately this block is going to be built up and it seems to me that this is just a trial expression.

MR. NAGEL: We have gone through many of these things, too. I appreciate your thinking.

MR. PEETS: That actually, although you put that on the radial, that is not the point, this is the radial, this is not a circle.

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MR. NISSEN: We have gone through many of these things, too. I appreciate your thinking.

MR. BELLUSCHI: That actually, although you put this on the radial, that is not the point, this is the radial, this is not a circle.

MR. NAGEL: Yes, it is an ellipse.

MR. PEETS: Each of these branches here, Scott and Webster, they create a situation here. This plan doesn't have to be radial from that. It could be square. It is triangular, a pretty awkward shape altogether, but I think it is possible to place it, whether it is desirable to introduce it at a plane such as this particularly and to some extent that one there and —

MR. BELLUSCHI: You can go on spreading it out, so that it would be much more logical to have a shape that would be somewhat fat in the center rather than building back to the natural depth of the lot.

MR. PEETS: I wasn't thinking about that. I was thinking strictly about the art of it in which, I mean that as far as the elevators are concerned and so forth -- I don't mean its definitive but only to start a discussion of the handling of the planes of the building. Although, I think that is a very charming shape.

MR. BELLUSCHI: The other one would have been somewhat clumsy.

MR. NAGEL: There is a matter of scale. For example, this is 70 feet wide here and when it gets much wider, then for example your areas inside are worthless. Coming in 25 or 30 feet is about the maximum for office use and by having some core in there we could run it up to 70 feet, say at this point. Although we could get slightly wider because it does taper towards the ends, there is a maximum there where at this far end I think it would be less desirable for use of the interior spaces. And we rather like the fact that it became symmetrical on this axial line here in that it began to seem somehow as something which was complete in itself and not a job somehow which sort of loosely conformed in outline.

MR. PEETS: Yes, but from another point of view, I think the same statements could be negative rather than positive. The building isn't alone. The building is part of the community.

MR. NAGEL: That is our approach, that is our beginning, that is why we did the little model primarily.

MR. PEETS: That may be a building which might serve as the center so that it might have walls this way (indicating) that would equal on this and be set in there as to be firmly planted on the ground and made an integral part of the ground. Here to a considerable extent, it ignores the plane of the neighborhood.

MR. BELLUSCHI: I wonder how important that is. I suppose that you see this, this part here, each part plays its own part and this being the dominant piece, the line you see here, this becomes a center in its unit rather than part of this. You try to stand here, you will see what I mean, that this in itself is something for itself. It doesn't have to compose with that. This, of course gives it direction and this becomes self —

MR. NAGEL: Here are photographs of the existing site. They are not very beautiful. They look toward the opening here. They are four story brick buildings. This is the Paint and Varnish Headquarters.

MR. PEETS: I think that is an elegant example of the trend of modern art to be egocentric, let us say.

101. WATKINS: Yes, it is an ellipse.

102. FETTER: Each of these branches (left, right and center), they create a situation here. This plan doesn't have to be radial, that is, it could be organic. It is triangular, a pretty sharp shape, altogether, but I think it is possible to place it, whether it is desirable to introduce it as a plane such as this particularly, and to some extent that one there and —

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106. WATKINS: There is a matter of scale. For example, this is 70 feet wide here and then it gets much wider, then for example, some areas inside are 100 feet. Coming in 25 or 30 feet is about the maximum for office use and by having some core in there we could run it up to 70 feet, say at this point. Although, it could get slightly wider because it does taper towards the ends, there is a maximum there where it is far and I think it would be less desirable for use of the interior spaces. And we rather like the fact that it becomes symmetrical on this axial line here in that it began to seem somehow as something which was complete in itself and not a form which sort of looked conformed to outside line.

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111. FETTER: Here are photographs of the existing site. They are not very beautiful. They look toward the opening here. They are low story with buildings. This is the main building and the other buildings.

112. FETTER: I think that is an example of the kind of modern way to be approached, let us see.

MR. NAGEL: That is a reprint from the Association's weekly magazine.

MR. BELLUSCHI: In reality, all that glass in that model is deceiving. You don't have quite as much glass as appears?

MR. NAGEL: From the top of the window to see level will be eight inches tie back, eight inches thick.

MR. BELLUSCHI: I see that you have a fairly high spandrel there so that the amount is about eleven?

MR. NAGEL: About ten feet. I would like to point out one more thing. We will have a total of eight floors here within 90 feet. This actually shows nine here but it will be restricted to eight because all that was under consideration and still is. We know now that the decision would not happen favorably to allow us nine. We could make it if we worked very carefully on flat slab and other things considered. We could put nine floors within the 90 feet but we will have only eight so we haven't finally fixed that.

MR. BELLUSCHI: If you have air conditioning there --

MR. NAGEL: The decision has not been made. That is a ten foot floor, the upper floors, the bottom floor will be more, the bottom will be fourteen.

MR. BELLUSCHI: Of course, speaking just for myself and not the Commission, I like it very much and the possibilities. I think from the criticism I have heard around, it does not take into consideration the climate of Washington. It would be bad if just for the sake of getting a lot of glass it became very unusable.

MR. NAGEL: We have some experts from your University, by the way, I do not know how it is but Mr. Harkness from the Fourteenth Street Bridge office as well as many of the others are involved more in the design than I am down here although I have a lot of the client contacts and relations with the District Office and site conference such as test boards and so on but there have been studies made by, some made at MIT regarding the sun movements and we have in the office an exchange now between Mr. Widlinger in New York and several engineers in town here and the Cambridge office and my office here about the way in which we can control sunlight both by the blue glass, the heat absorption, the vertical and horizontal fins. We have some very interesting patterns developed for that and then also the normal internal controls of venetian blinds wherever it is desired for appearance to have the drapes within the rooms. The interior will be a flexible affair. As I mentioned a while ago, the upper stories will be essentially loft floors, so we hope to give them a building which will meet their purposes and have an attractive exterior and have a highly usable interior group of spaces. The ground floor will be essentially reception and meeting rooms and library for the organization and we will attempt to treat that quite eloquently with marble and terrazzo and other very nice materials to give an openness in the center section and then it would be potted plants of the tropical varieties so it would be an attractive space, we hope. We have brought the lower floor back, the walls, recessed those so that we get strong shadows and get some of the elegance of the southern colonial mansions as I know them in the South and get a sharper definition of form. We think the prism will be a very handsome form and if the bottom line is not a jumpy indefinite sort of thing but a crisp line, the prism as a form then will be quite nice.

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MR. BELLUSCHI: I see your columns are inside of the building line quite a bit.

MR. NAGEL: Yes.

MR. BELLUSCHI: How far in?

MR. NAGEL: About fourteen inches back because we have got the problem of chase, of pipes coming up at every column between the column and the window itself. It will be around a 14 by 14 chase in front of each column so the setback is about 14 inches.

MR. PEETS: I like it very much as a building. I would accept it immediately as civic art if you would promise to design something in place of this (indicating).

MR. NAGEL: We will work on it. There is an equal opportunity here. I hope we may get into that. We are very much interested in Washington and I have found myself in the last fifteen or sixteen months here in Washington, found my self attracted to the strong elements which Washington has created. I like them all. I like this triumvirate of monuments, the spire, the needle of the Washington Monument, the rectilinear form of the Lincoln Monument and this delightful floating dome from the distance of the Jefferson Memorial. I think it is a wonderful integrated triumvirate. I think that in our terms and in our problems today in spite of commercial pressures, we can find a way of placing our new buildings within the framework as they have been set by L'Enfant. I like the challenge very much. I personally was interested, extremely interested, was attracted into this area primarily because of this problem.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: It is expected that the floors other than the three occupied by the Science Foundation will be occupied by similar organizations, not commercial ones?

MR. NAGEL: Probably organizations underneath them, various civic organizations or engineering organizations which will want a national representation. They will have a small group of offices, so they will rent space above and eventually as the organization itself will expand and eventually take it all over. The work at the headquarters is essentially stenographic, editing and administrative in nature so it must have the character of an office building. It must be a working place inside but it can be that at the same time that it attracts from the outside.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: Any other comments that any of the members would like to make, or questions? We appreciate very much your coming. We are very glad to see it.

MR. NAGEL: Shall I leave these with you a day or two?

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: What is your pleasure, gentlemen, do you want to study it further?

MR. HUDNUT: No.

CHAIRMAN FINLEY: I think perhaps it would be safer if you take them with you.

(Exit Mr. Nagel.)

MR. TOLSON: These four columns are inside of the building line of the

MR. TOLSON: Yes.

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MR. TOLSON: It is expected that the House will be decided by the House of Representatives, for

MR. TOLSON: Probably organizationally, but, various civil groups

MR. TOLSON: My other comments that any of the members would like

MR. TOLSON: Shall I leave those with you or shall I

MR. TOLSON: That is your statement, gentlemen, do you want to say

MR. TOLSON: No.

MR. TOLSON: I think perhaps it would be better if you talk things with

C O P Y

ACACIA MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE CO.

51 Louisiana Avenue, N. W.

Washington D. C.

August 27, 1952

Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia

District Building

Washington, D. C.

Gentlemen:

During the years 1924 and 1925 Acacia Mutual Life Insurance Company acquired title to all of the land in square 631. This square, according to the zoning maps at the office of the Zoning Commission, was zoned in 1920 as first commercial with a 90 foot building height limit.

In the year 1936 Acacia completed the first section of its present Home Office Building on square 631. At that time Acacia had a little over 352 million dollars of insurance in force and employed approximately 350 people in its Home Office building. Since that time, its insurance in force has increased to approximately 1 billion 200 million dollars and its Home Office personnel has increased to approximately 850.

Plans are now being developed whereby the second section of the Home Office building will adjoin the present building on the west facing Louisiana and Indiana Avenues, N. W. extending to 1st Street, N. W. and thence running north along the east side of 1st Street, N. W. to D Street, N. W. The ultimate extension of the Home Office building will be along the south side of D Street, N. W. to New Jersey Avenue, N. W. and thence down the east side of New Jersey Avenue, N. W. to the eastern end of the present building, thus forming a hollow square building covering the entire square of 631.

Had materials been available and had federal regulations permitted, Acacia would undoubtedly have previously extended its Home Office building by the addition of this second section in order to eliminate the very crowded conditions existing in its present building and thus have permitted more efficient and economical operation of its business.

In considering the erection of the second section and keeping in mind the ultimate extension of the Home Office building, its architects have advised Acacia that it is not only desirable but almost an absolute necessity if we are to derive the maximum use of the land available for construction to raise the height of the extension along 1st and D Streets, N. W. from 90 feet to 110 feet.

Square 573 bounded on the east by 1st Street, N. W. is zoned for 110 foot building height limit. The Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building fronting on the west side of 1st Street, N. W. from Indiana Avenue, N. W. to D Street, N. W. which is directly across the street from and will face the presently proposed addition to Acacia's Home Office building, has been constructed on square 573 to a height of 110 feet.

First Street, N. W. has a map width of 90 feet. Louisiana Avenue, N. W. has a map width of 126 feet. There is, therefore, no statutory impediment to rezoning square 631 to a height of 110 feet.

For the convenience of the Zoning Commission in considering this matter, there is attached a plot plan of square 631 showing the location and height of Acacia's present Home Office building and the desired height for all future additions. Also attached is the architects' perspective showing the present Home Office building and the proposed addition thereto.

It is the purpose of this letter to petition the Zoning Commission for an amendment to the present regulations and maps increasing the building height restrictions on square 631 from 90 feet to 110 feet. It is respectfully requested that a public hearing be had on this petition pursuant to the provisions of Section 5-415 of the District of Columbia Code (1951 Edition).

Sincerely yours,

Sgd.

WILLIAM MONTGOMERY

President

WM:IM
Att.
HWK

First Street, N. W. has a map which is 90 feet. In addition, there is a map which is 125 feet. There is, therefore, no statutory requirement to remove square 831 to a point of 125 feet.

For the convenience of the Joint Commission in considering this matter, there is attached a plot plan of square 831 showing the location and height of the present Home Office building and the desired height for all future additions. Also attached is the proposed perspective showing the present Home Office building and the proposed addition structure.

It is the purpose of this letter to petition the Joint Commission for an amendment to the present regulations and rules governing the building height restrictions on square 831 from 90 feet to 125 feet. It is respectfully requested that a public hearing be had on this petition pursuant to the provisions of Section 2-415 of the District of Columbia Code (1941 Edition).

Sincerely yours,

Ed.

EDWARD J. COVENEY

President

111
122
133
144

C O P Y

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
Interior Department Building
Washington D. C.

October 22, 1952

Dear Mr. Nolen:

Your letter of October 17th, with its enclosures, concerning a change in the zoning height for an addition to the rear of the Acacia Mutual Life Insurance Company building from 90 to 110 feet, received consideration by the Commission of Fine Arts at a meeting held today.

The Commission approve the design.

The drawings are returned.

For The Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

Sgd.

David E. Finley,
Chairman.

Mr. John Nolen, Jr., Director,
National Capital Planning Commission,
Washington D. C.

Enclosure

THE COMMISSION ON THE ARTS
Interior Department Building
Washington, D. C.

October 22, 1952

Dear Mr. Nolan:

Your letter of October 17th, with its en-
closures, concerning a change in the seating height
for an addition to the rear of the Federal Reserve
Life Insurance Company Building from 30 to 110 feet,
received consideration by the Commission of Fine Arts
at a meeting held today.

The Commission approve the design.

The drawings are returned.

For The Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

34.
David E. Finley,
Chairman.

Mr. John Nelson, Jr., Director,
National Capital Planning Commission,
Washington, D. C.

Enclosure

ges 4 and 5 On decorating public buildings

- 16 Conservatory of Music
- 19 Selection of sculptors by the Bureau of the Mint
- 27 Engraving, postage stamps, Bureau of Engraving and Printing
- 28 Designs for postage stamps, Post Office Department
- 32 Historical Buildings Survey, measured drawings, National Park Service
- 35 Indian Arts and Crafts program
- 38-39 Art in public schools
- 50 Paintings, Department of Defense
- 70 National Gallery of Art---exhibitions
- 75 Radio---educational programs
- 83 Government Film Activity
- 96 Establishing additional State and Municipal Art Commissions
- 125 Recommendation by Dr. Johnstone of State Department "...for a general policy to be pursued by the State Department in its use of fine arts in its overseas program.."
- 140 Recommendation by Mr. Goodrich regarding design and decoration of public buildings---
- 159 Recommendation by Mr. Goodrich, "Any plan for future activities should be a long-range one.."
- 162 Suggestion to extend powers of the Commission of Fine Arts beyond the District of Columbia
- 163 Suggestion to appoint regional Art Directors
- 168 Suggestion as to international exchange of art exhibitions
- 173 National Sculpture Society---keep the Commission of Fine Arts organized as it is.
- 175 Persons not artists should not assume power over artists

National Opera House for Washington

Recommendation to the President for issuance of an Executive Order providing that all contracts for public buildings involving architecture, landscape architecture, sculpture, and painting shall state in the contract that designs for such building have been submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts.

Taken from Summary

and 5 On decorating public buildings

Conservatory of Music

Selection of sculptors by the Bureau of the Mint

Engraving, postage stamps, Bureau of Engraving and Printing

Designs for postage stamps, Post Office Department

Historical Buildings Survey, measured drawings, National Park Service

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National Sculpture Society--keep the Commission of Fine Arts organized as it is.

Persons not artists should not assume power over artists

National Opera House for Washington

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